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**Panel on Welfare Services and Panel on Health Services**

**Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for  
the meeting on 1 June 2020**

**Application of gerontechnology in elderly care services**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the application of gerontechnology in elderly care services and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by members during previous discussions on the subject.

**Background**

Promoting the use of gerontechnology products

2. The Administration has set up a \$1 billion Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care ("the IT Fund") in December 2018 to subsidize eligible elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure, rent and trial use technology products, so as to improve the quality of life of service users and reduce the burden and pressure of care staff and carers. The scope of application includes device, equipment and tools that help enhance the effectiveness and quality of care, mobile applications and high-end hardware and software (e.g. systems that can effectively and accurately record the activities, health condition, medical records, etc. of elderly persons and persons with disabilities). The amount of subsidy covers the cost of staff training on the use of the technology products and the cost of warranty/maintenance of the products for a maximum of 5 years.

3. The IT Fund was open for application in two tranches in 2019. For the first tranche, a total grant of some \$37 million was approved for more than 210 elderly and rehabilitation services units to procure/rent over 870 items of technology products. Among these applicants, there were a total of 169 elderly service units. For the second tranche of application, a total of about 2 300 items of technology products from over 650 service units were received.

4. The Social Welfare Department ("SWD") has commissioned the Hong Kong Council of Social Service ("HKCSS") to promote the use of innovative technology in long-term care services and coordinate the collaboration among various stakeholders. In addition, the Administration, HKCSS and the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation jointly organized the Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to showcase local and overseas innovative products and concepts, and provided a collaborative platform for various stakeholders to continue to promote the development of gerontechnology.

### **Deliberations by members since 2017-2018 session**

#### Use of gerontechnology products by elderly care units

5. Members expressed concern that some private residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") had purchased feeding machines and bathing machines, with a view to generating more business through the use of the IT Fund. Members considered it a step backwards if elderly care services were provided in a manner without human touch and technology was used solely by RCHEs for making more money.

6. According to the Administration, bathing machines were used in Japan and Taiwan, and many elderly persons enjoyed using them. The use of bathing machines had helped improve the relationship between elderly persons and carers. Many technology products could help alleviate the workload of carers provided that such products fitted in with the settings and work processes of the service units.

7. Some members enquired whether the requirements concerning the daily operation of RCHEs under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance (Cap. 459), the Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) and the Operational Manual on Drug Management in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly had impeded the use of gerontechnology products by RCHEs. The Administration advised that it encouraged RCHEs to use suitable technology products, but any new products or applied technologies must comply with prevailing regulatory

requirements.

Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care

8. Noting that applicant organizations might apply for the IT Fund for procurement/rental of equipment, hardware and software, members enquired whether the Administration had assessed the types of technology products for which grants from the IT Fund would be sought. According to the Administration, it was expected that most applicant organizations would apply for the IT Fund to procure/rent or trial use hardware but adaptations of software to the hardware might be required in some cases. Applications for funding in relation to information and communication technologies from welfare service organizations would be considered by SWD under a separate existing mechanism. These organizations might also apply for the Lotteries Fund to subsidize the procurement of software.

9. Members noted that the Innovation and Technology Bureau established the Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living ("FBL") in May 2017 to subsidize projects which aimed at improving people's daily living or benefiting specific community groups through the use of innovation and technology. They asked whether there was any linkage between the IT Fund and FBL.

10. The Administration advised that FBL covered various aspects and some of them were related to social welfare services. Unlike FBL, which accepted applications from individuals, the IT Fund only accepted applications from eligible welfare service organizations. Although the IT Fund should not be used for research and development purposes, applicant organizations might identify suitable technology research and development companies as working partners and apply for subsidy to try technology products which were newly developed by their working partners. However, the newly developed technology products should be suitable for use in Hong Kong.

**Relevant papers**

11. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant papers on  
application of gerontechnology in elderly care services**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Welfare Services	8 January 2018 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	24 January 2018	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 131 to 135</a>

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